

15
THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE OF REFORM.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

OF

PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE,

GETTYSBURG, PA.,

AUGUST 9th, 1865,

BY REV. M. VALENTINE, A. M.

GETTYSBURG:

AUGHINBAUGH & WIBLE, BOOK & JOB PRINTERS,
NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE DIAMOND.

1865.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

AN ADDRESS

BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE SOCIETY OF STUDENTS

IN 1881

BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

OF THE UNIVERSITY

OF KENT

AND THE SOCIETY OF STUDENTS

BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

OF THE UNIVERSITY

OF KENT

AND THE SOCIETY OF STUDENTS

IN 1881

DELIVERED

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE SOCIETY OF STUDENTS

1881

PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE,
August 10th, 1865.

REV. M. VALENTINE,

Dear Sir:—We have been instructed by the Alumni Association to thank you for your excellent Address, and to request a copy for publication.

With sentiments of high regard,

Very truly yours,

M. L. STOEVEER,
J. E. GRAEFF,
J. E. SMITH.

READING, PA., August 14th, 1865.

GENTLEMEN:

In compliance with the request of the Alumni Association, conveyed in your note, the manuscript of the Address is placed in your hands.

Most sincerely yours,

M. VALENTINE,

Prof. M. L. STOEVEER,
Rev. J. E. GRAEFF,
Hon. J. E. SMITH,

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ADDRESS.

FELLOW ALUMNI OF PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE:

OUR times are marked by a peculiar emphasis in reformatory theory and effort. The stirring events of the last few years have added fresh impulse to the ardor with which the earnest mind of our country was before directed to the possibilities and means of a better condition of man's personal and social state. Our ears discern a sound of unusual velocity in the chariot-wheels of progress, as Providence is driving them over the crushed fruits of former evils. There is an eager endeavor to reconstruct and reform, and a general expectation that the movement of events is onward to worthier and happier developments of life and society than have yet been enjoyed.

We cannot be indifferent to these things. Our contact with the thinking mind of the day, and much more, our obligation to bear a worthy part in every movement connected with the public good, oblige us to give them an earnest attention. It is our privilege and glory, to cast our influence in favor of the true and right in every question that concerns human welfare. These movements are not incipient, but the unfolding and ripening fruit of agitations and efforts in earlier times. They involve and recall the *whole subject* of moral and social reform. As it is not all gold that glitters, so it is not all reform that assumes that popular name. We must sift the true from the false, and discriminate the diamond from the dust. In the discussion and experience of the past, and in the emphatic teaching of current events, present in-

quiry has attained vantage position for the comprehension of the entire reformatory problem. The constant effort of restless theorists and devoted workers, has thrown off results, successful, injurious, or mingled, which show, in no doubtful light, the line along which all true endeavor must move. It is our purpose, standing as we all do, in the midst of this light, to mark and present, as a subject appropriate to our present annual Alumni fellowship,

The Essential Principle of Reform.

Our discussion will involve a presentation of what we conceive to be this true principle, and illustrations of its correctness, in examples of failure by its violation, and success by its observance. Success, in this relation, may be regarded as a seal of correctness; since it indicates the guidance of Heaven's own laws, for the promotion of human welfare. Attempted reforms that fall, like barren blossoms, fruitless of blessing, reveal thus their want of proper grafting into the true living principle.

I. Our first guiding lines, as we approach this subject, appear in recalling the source of all reformatory endeavor. It is the pressure of the evils sought to be removed. Mankind has ever been groaning in bondage to them. Along with the sigh for spiritual redemption, all ages have uttered constant pleadings for deliverance from the burdens of social and economic disorder and wretchedness. There has been a ceaseless and sore consciousness, that man is out of his organic and constitutional sphere, and society is disordered, moving with distressing frictions and inequalities. No time has been without men with eyes to see and hearts to feel the existence of these evils. Out of this oppression, wrong and unrest, there has come a ceaseless longing for a better era of the race. Men have dreamed of a state of things, in which injustice, crime, slavery, want and broken-hearted misery should not be found. "A better time coming," has ever risen, as a bright star of hope, to the view of an oppressed and disharmonized world. The misery-smitten, unless all

hope has died, are ever dreaming out schemes of relief and happiness. Whether blindly or not, the hope has been ceaselessly cherished, that the Paradise that blooms not in the present, will yet bloom one in the future of the earth. Despite all past failures, men have anticipated some happy adjustment of human relations, of commercial, social, domestic and governmental forces, that will right existing evils, and bring about a sort of social Arcadia in which all men shall be happy and contented.

The phenomenon of this ever-restless reformatory endeavor, wild and chimerical as it sometimes is, is, therefore, deeply significant of disorganization and wretchedness in man's moral and social relations. It is the world struggle against a condition whose pains it feels, but whose meaning it does not comprehend. It is the social sigh for a better state—a protest against what *is*, as not what it *ought* to be. It is the writhing of the bound Prometheus. And as one plan or item of reform after another is pressed into energetic trial, Pope's poor philosophy, and worse theology, "What e'er is, is right," receives but few believers.

II. A glance at the history of these efforts, recalling the character and number of philanthropic attempts to remodel society or eliminate its evils, will prepare us still better for a satisfactory statement of the true principles of reform. Reform is many-sided, and its meaning is to be determined by the department of life, political, social, or individual, in which it works. The word sometimes becomes local and technical. In England, reform and anti-reform, express opposing systems of governmental policy, forming the battlefield on which "Whigs" and "Tories" manoeuvre their political forces. In our country, the word is used in a sense more generic, and expressive of progress in every department and relation of life. The full history of reforms and reformers would require an examination of many "dusty folios." Before the era of Christianity, Diogenes pressed biting apothegms against abounding follies and inequalities. Plato, leaving the hard actual, and manipulating the more pliant

ideal, developed a theoretic Republic, as the model after which society should be organized for the cure of its evils. Within the Jewish Commonwealth, at the period of its decline after the Babylonian captivity, the Essenes constituted a reformatory association, to bring new and powerful appliances to bear on the ills of society, to stem its corruptions and pour sanitary and life-giving power into its veins. They were a brotherhood of simple but rigid ascetics, refraining from oaths and slavery, holding property in common, discharging marriage and living in pure celibacy—the “Shakers” of Judaic times. Later, and in the Christian world, Luther and his co-laborers, though not looking to social reform or temporal ameliorations as the end of effort, brought into operation mighty agencies, whose reformatory power has been deep, radical, wide-spread and permanent. We find Tomaso Campanella, in Italy, proposing radical political reconstruction, that brought him into prison; and James Harrington, in England, idealizing another model commonwealth, in an imaginary Oceana. In this, however, he was preceded by Sir Thomas More, with his well-known “Utopia”—the dream of a perfect political and social organization, remarkable for the incongruity of tolerating personal slavery, yet disallowing individual property. The socialistic speculations of Coleridge, though very visionary, are interesting. In his early life, he was full of the idea of the social and political regeneration of the world. Robert Lovell, and the poet Southey, warmly seconded his magnificent conception, which, when actualized, was to restore the earth to Eden-like freedom and happiness. But the world was too old and stubborn to be regenerated and governed according to their novel theory. Changing their scheme, but still dreaming the pleasant but chimerical dream of human perfectability, they planned the organization of a grand “PANTISOCRACY”—a realized Platonic Republic—to be founded in America, on the waters of the Susquehanna or the Mississippi, where perfect liberty and pure philosophy should drive away the ills of corrupt society. But the foundations of

this semi-Paridisaic commonwealth were never laid, save in the brain of the visionary projectors. In France, the history of Encyclopædism is largely a history of social and political reform. Its fruits ripened and fell in the French Revolution. The name of Claude Henri Count de Simon is well known as heading a band of social regenerators. Returning to France, after service in our own Revolution, he published an elaborate scheme for the reconstruction and elevation of society. He assumed that *Love*, being brought into efficient operation, would solve all difficulties, redress all grievances, and remove all abuses, in the condition of mankind. St. Simon not only attempted to introduce new social principles, but a new religion—a full philosophical system of morals and government, by which all the ills of humanity were to be removed—a real gospel of social happiness. From St. Simonism, we are called to the recent speculations of Robert Owen. To the mind of Owen, all the ills in the social economy have flowed from religion, priests and priest-craft, and he presents himself as the apostle of a reform that shall banish these, and associate men under the guidance and governance of simple *Reason*. The associations, sprung from his teaching, are anti-Christian, and their exertions are directed quite as much against religion as against social evils. But, most prominent, perhaps, in the catalogue of these movements, has been the rise of Fourierism. The theory of this French reformer would wholly recast society, and organize it in communities or associations, not excluding individual property, but laboring under common direction, carrying on all trades and arts within their own circle, and forming, in every feature, save personal goods, a communist brotherhood. Socialist communities, after his system, have been established in France and in this country. The hearts of some of our more radical reformers have been strongly drawn to the scheme. In "Hints towards Reform," by Horace Greeley, in 1857, Fourier's social architecture is accorded high praise, and looked upon as a harbinger of a better era. The author proposes a republican organization of labor and society, after the Four-

ierian ideal, and sees no reason "why, in the end, the wildest dreams of the fanatical believer in human progress may not ultimately be realized," (p. 45.)

Within the last twenty years, our country has heard every possible change rung upon the charming word "Reform." Old plans have been galvanized by new reformers. The spirit of innovation and change has left few of our ancient habits undisturbed, whether good, bad or indifferent. From some quarters we have had panaceas for the whole hurt of humanity; from others, more sober, we have been favored with pleasant, if not successful, specifics for various local disorders, both acute and chronic. If numbers were efficient, we have had enough troublings of the water, by angels of reform, to heal all the woes in the crowded porches of humanity. But the waters become quiet again, and the moanings of distress in the porches have hardly been abated. Emerson has conversed across the waves with the spirit of Carlisle, and we have had Transcendentalism, with its mystic schemes, both moral and political. We have had Parkerism, Fanny Wrightism, Shaker exercises, and economies. We have been called, not to repentance for the past, but reformation for the future, by Phrenology and Mesmerism. Woman's Rights' conventions have solemnly informed us that the woes of society have sprung from MAN'S usurpations and tyranny, and the rectification of all is to be attained in summoning her to the ballot, the pulpit and the legislative hall. Before our old-fogy minds have had time to grow calm from this, Spiritualism presents its ghostly form before us, and accounts anew for our manifold evils, prescribes the way of deliverance, and rebukes our slowness of belief by the noisy racket of multitudinous dancing tables. We have had fierce Philipics against almost all the existing methods of life, labor and social adjustment. Our interest in new movements has been kept in constant tension; and we are even now, by "Gail Hamilton," in the "New Atmosphere" in which she believes the world may breathe in a better peace, called to examine into the propriety of so amending the old marriage institu-

tion as to leave the continuance of the altar-bound bond at the pleasure of the disappointed party. Every part of the moral, domestic, social, and political structure, under whose shadows, either pleasant, or distressing, the past has been delighted or compelled to sit, is feeling the blows of vigorous innovation. Institutions that are to stand, must have more than the moss of age for their safety.

III. Now, above the background of this restless dissatisfaction with the existing, and ceaseless endeavor after a happier state of things, we must read, where God has written it, the only true and essential principle of reform, overlooked and refused by so many who have assumed to be its apostles. Long has the truth been shining on the darkness, but the darkness has comprehended it not. Every real reform and all genuine progress, that shall remove evils and tend to adjust human affairs in harmony, prosperity and happiness, must be attained in the way of return to divine order and conformity to divine constitution. The disappearance of earth's disorder, discord and wretchedness, will ever be in direct proportion to the adjustment of political institutions, social relations and individual life to Heaven's laws of right and love. These laws can be read distinctly and surely only on the pages of the volume of revelation. Christianity, as God's disclosure of the method of his government, the condition of our race, and the meaning of its ills, as an authoritative announcement of moral relations, human duties, and of the appointed remedy for the hurt and sin of the earth, furnishes the only and the essential guide in reformatory effort. The leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations. Here, and here alone, we believe we can find the true and sure principle of either moral, social or political reform—the reception and application of the doctrines, laws and forces of the religion of Jesus Christ. The needed amelioration of the state of man could not originate or acquire corrective force on the plane of the earthly. It descended into the world's disorder from a higher plane. CHRIST CAME AS THE REFORMER OF THE EARTH. Included in his office of Sa-

viour of souls, is this office for this world. He came to send a "sword" against the wrongs and oppressions that have lacerated sorrowed mankind. He came, with truths and principles that should wage perpetual war against all wrongs, and whose acceptance should re-adjust personal and social movements into harmony and peace. Others may be reformers indeed, in a subordinate position and agency, when they lay hold of the principles of his religion and bring them into more effectual application to each or any department of life. He who works along a different line of endeavor, simply pushes the old disorders into worse complications. The more fiercely he drives his efforts, at variance with Christianity, the more he does, to deny society a return to the only condition in which the principles of God's moral government will allow it prosperity and happiness.

In thus presenting the necessary law of reform, it is done in no forgetfulness of the fact, that it is based altogether on the Christian theory of humanity and social evil. The whole subject is viewed from the Christian stand-point. It is maintained that revelation, completed in Christ, furnishes the only solution, as well as the only effectual corrective, of the evils which reformers would eliminate from life. And why should we ignore the satisfying light which Christianity has shed on this subject? Why should we sink the Christian into the pagan, in deciding it? Would it not be inexplicable perverseness, to leave the mountain light and elevation on which revelation has placed us, and descend back into the dreary region where the dim tapers of reason and human philosophy have guided useless speculation? Could any one maintain respect for either his observation or his judgment, who would deny the cumulative demonstration of eighteen centuries that the Gospel is Heaven's ordained power for the regeneration and adjustment of life in its best possible condition? We envy not the mind that can adjudge either the conclusions of heathen philosophy or the proposals of infidel empiricism wiser than the directions of the Christian's Bible. We believe the voice, as we look on Jesus, and hear the utterance,

"Behold a greater than Solomon is here!" The Divine Philosophy, personal, ethical and social, descended in Jesus, and "Behold, a greater than Plato is here!" It seems like irreverence to come down to some others, and repeat, "Behold, a greater than St. Simon, or Owen, or Fourier, or Emerson, or Parker, is here!"

But, that we are thus to find the method and energy of true reform in Christianity, as embodied in its entire circle of truths, principles and directions for the various relations of life, may be easily made apparent.

1. It alone adequately recognizes and takes into account the real cause of evil. Many persons who have arrogated to themselves the distinctive name of Reformer, have been philosophically and theologically disqualified for the assumed work. They have cut their sounding lines too short to reach to the origin of the wrongs they proposed to remove. They have been unbelievers in the existence of the roots of the tree, at whose branches they have smitten and hewn so vigorously. A false premise has underlain their whole system of treatment. They have generally assumed the essential soundness and perfectability of human nature. They have gone on the theory, that all its ills arise only from circumstances, or some mal-adjustment and administration of external relations. Lately, a wing of them under the guide of Phrenology, has insisted on the innocence of crime, on the ground of an unfortunate cranial development of the supposed criminal. He is to be pitied, not punished, for what he could not help. There has been a failure rightly to appreciate, or a total denial of, the great truth of the Fall, and the radical depravity of our nature. If, however, it be true, that this depravity is a fact, despite its refusal by such men, and that a cure must always go to the root of the disease, their appliances must necessarily be ineffectual. Missing the cause, they must miss the remedy. They are physicians who are doctoring at the symptoms, but think not of even a homeopathic administration to the disease. The roots of all man's miseries, and society's troubles, are in the inmost soul

of the individual. Sin has brought into the commonwealth of the human soul utter anarchy, and violent and grinding tyranny. The conscience and the affections are at variance. Passion rules. Conscience, though drugged or down-trodden, protests. This inner disorder and infliction, is the pattern and origin of the outer anarchy and wretchedness. The whole man, internally and externally, is in rebellion against the laws, under which he was formed. Sin has thrown him out of his sphere, and he moves in perpetual clashing in all his relations. Reform is solemnly needed wherever the thousands of our unsphered and disharmonized race collide in social, economic, or civil disorder. But there is, according to Christian philosophy, but one *root* to all the myriad evils that have attracted the attention, and reformatory effort of the philanthropic. And we cannot but feel it, as an intimation of the deeper and truer philosophy of reform which should supersede the world's superficial blunderings, when we hear the Fore-runner of Christ say: "And now the axe is laid at the *root* of the tree." That which strikes higher than this only cuts off some branches, and leaves the force of the evil life untouched, to shoot up again in perhaps more vigorous and crooked manifestations. When Elisha, the prophet, was to heal the streams of Jericho, he was directed to go forth to the spring of the waters, and cast in the salt there. To be forever trying to sweeten the streams, and take no account of the ever-active bitter fountain, is a symbol of the reform that does not recognize the Christian doctrine of the innate corruption and sin of the race. St. Simon, assuming the origin of social distempers, not in the depravity of the individual heart, but in want of social unity, expected moral, intellectual, and industrial perfection from a radical reorganization of external relations. Fourier based his whole social fabric on the assumption, that "the source of all evil is to be found in the wide-spread ignorance, which, without comprehending human nature aright, throws it into false position, and puts all its fine-spun harmonies into discord." (Morell's Hist. of Philos. p. 384.) Many of the more pretentious

philosophical tendencies of the times, have fallen into the same incapacity for effective reform. The whole circle of transcendental speculation does not discover the essential corruption of the race. Pantheism knows nothing of the Fall. The French school of Positivism, while it has eyes to see so many things that do not exist, does not discern this fact, which makes answer for itself from every page of human history. "According to the views of Pantheism and the Positive Philosophy," says Guizot, in his "Meditations," (p. 35,) "Divine Providence, and human liberty, the origin of evil, the commingling and the strife of good and evil in the world and in man, the imperfection of the present order of things and the destiny of man, the prospect of the establishment of order in the future; these are all mere dreams, freaks of man's thought; no such questions exist; inasmuch as the world is eternal, it is in its actual state complete, normal and definitive, though at the same time progressive. The remedy for the moral and physical evils that afflict mankind must be sought, not in any power superior to the world, but simply in the progress of the sciences, and the advance of human enlightenment." What can be done by these systems whose very corner-stone is laid in a false conception of human nature? If Christianity has taken the right diagnosis of the disease, it alone is competent to describe the remedy.

2. But, further, Christianity, in the integrity of its doctrines and precepts, alone brings with it the regenerating and corrective energies indispensable to true and permanent reform. No humanitarian theory proposes any thing higher than merely natural forces. It would effect everything by organization, external readjustment and association. It would regenerate men in the mass—melt down a whole community, and recast it in harmony and beauty. It proposes agrarian, or communist schemes. It would remodel the world by an idea, or educate the race into purity, justice, liberty, equality and beatific brotherhood. By these various means, it would cut off all the parasitic excrescences, the wrongs, oppressions and miseries of the race, and make the so-called

corrupt tree of humanity bring forth only good fruit, and grow as round and orderly and even and precise, as a well-clipped box-shrub, or arbor-vitæ hedge. But in the principle of Christianity, there is a new and higher factor of power introduced into the work of reform. It begins with the regeneration of the individual, and commences his recovery to his proper place and sphere, from which he had been thrown by sin—the sphere of order, harmony and happiness. It proposes to act on the mighty mass of society, by thus acting in reformatory power, on the millions of individuals that compose it. God reforms the face of the earth out of the desolations of winter, by new life in every tree, plant, flower, and spear of grass that clothes its thousand hills and valleys in green. It is by the change in the unit buds that the aggregate result is wrought. It is in individual hearts, as the fountain of actual life, either good or bad, that the initial reform must take place. Schemers have been able to bring no adequate rectifying power into the heart. They have had no branch to cast into this bitter fountain. But Christianity does not stop here. It furnishes the only sure principles for the adjustment and regulation of all the external relations and movements of Christianized humanity. It is God's prescription for the re-ordering of his broken and anarchical race. From the individual, it proceeds to the family, and organizes there the smallest circle of *social* life, with laws and forces to secure its best possible condition. From the family, it extends its regulative direction to men as communities, engaged in all the varied proper business of life. It prescribes rules of justice, kindness and common brotherhood, under God's common Fatherhood, that do, in exact obedience to them, remove wrong, oppression, injury and want, from among men. It treats man as a social being, and brings its mighty moral forces to sanctify and harmonize all his inter-human relations. Society, permeated by the spirit and life of Christianity, and moving, in every respect, according to Christian principles, rules, and love, would exhibit the nearest attainable success in the long, fruitless effort to locate the

Garden of Eden. From the community, it ascends to the State, and defines Caesar's duties as well as Caesar's dues. Government becomes an "ordinance of God," "for the terror of evil-doers and the praise of them that do well." The political principles that lie in Christianity, are the guides to liberty, equality and prosperity in the nation. Developed into complete realization, they would present a commonwealth more true to human interests and welfare, than even a realized "Republic" of Plato, or "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More. Thus, Christianity touches with regenerating, healing, sanctifying, regulative power, the whole circle of human relations, from centre to circumference. It begins with the fatal cause of all external disorders, the corruption of the human heart, which has sported with the weakness and defied the strength of all human contrivances to subdue them. And then it widens its control into an adjustment of all external relations, and puts the whole life, customs, institutions and enjoyments of men under the direction of Justice and Love, and into harmony with Heaven's laws of order and happiness:—with the Divine Constitution. The wheels within the wheels will work with no distressing frictions, if Christianity—this hand of God reached down from the skies—is permitted to rectify and regulate human affairs.

3. We may read the necessity of clinging to this principle in the disaster of all reform that disregards it. There are trees of reform that God has withered along every road where men have planted at variance with the directions of his word. There are heaps of brick and slime from many a tower of Babel, started by social architects who have not consulted the oracles of revelation. There are many carefully-carved pillars lying about where some Samson of reform, whose eyes infidelity put out, buried his thousands in ruins, by pressing against the only columns that can support the temple of society. Every reform that has not run along the line of the principle I have indicated, has proved a blank failure, or left another moral plague for the injury and misery of community. Agrarian or communist theories

contravene the truth that property, as well as religion, is an ordinance of God, and they aggravate the miseries of the inequality of which they complain. The socialistic schemes, that, in the interest of any sort of transcendental unions, changeable at the caprice of some mysterious spiritual affinities, impair the scriptural sanctity of the marriage bond, or that organize Shaker economies in total contempt of the relation, have inflicted fresh sores, or deformities on society. The radicalism that tries to reform Moses and the Gospel, as well as the Church's exhibition of them, has never failed to bear fruit delusive and bitter. In the French Revolution, the atheistic and misguided theories of the day culminated in confusion and blood. It was a grand and sublime idea, that the people should be free and self-governing. But the infidelity that mingled in the movement defeated the aim. The tree of Liberty which was planted, withered in the breath of men who shouted the inauguration of a proposed religion of *Reason*, in the place of down-trodden Christianity. What popular hope looked upon as a Reform, Infidelity turned into disintegration, falling into an anarchy that had to be arrested by a stronger despotism. A Murat and Robespierre ever prepare the way for a Bonaparte. The small organization, gathered under the banner of St. Simonism, fell into such gross immorality that it was broken up by the civil authority. Owenism, that promised so much from the expulsion of priest-craft, has exhibited its results in a few more running sores on the body social. And the Fourier garden, that was to restore Eden, has brought forth only weeds. It has become the home for the revels of Deism and Atheism, where knots of malcontents fulminate against the ordinances of Heaven, and add virulence to the disorders of society, whose woes they profess to deplore. The reformers that have cut themselves loose from the moorings of the Divine Word, or allied themselves to any merely humanitarian theory of our nature, have uniformly paralyzed their best energies for good, even in the direction of true improvement, and made the line of their efforts a scene, more of destroying than remedial power. Theodore

Parker may be taken as a representative man, and an illustration, in this particular. The sod is now on his grave, but in his day, he was a restless and vigorous agitator. With a strong and earnest mind, working with great rapidity and brilliance, he was intellectually qualified to achieve a marked mission. He had a keen eye to see, and a deep heart to feel, the wrongs and ills that disfigure and oppress society. He threw his strong and impetuous soul into the work of reform, and his bold and striking style of thought and oratory enabled him to wield an unusual popular sway. Had he seized the right lever, he might have uplifted many a burden and wrong and misery from society. He might have been a strong angel of relief and succor, of deliverance and joy, to the down-trodden and the injured. But he ran into a radicalism that undertook to correct the teaching of Moses and of Jesus Christ. He discarded the Bible doctrine of the fall and of sin. Human nature needed only a right education, and it would bear all excellent fruitage. He placed the Christian Scriptures in the same category with the Vedas, the Zendavesta, or the Koran. He arraigned some of the grandest acts of Christ as fractured by sin and self, and refused to call Jesus, Master in theologic doctrine or practical wisdom. He spoke patronizingly sometimes of the Nazarene youth as doing very well for his day and nation, but as one still to be outgrown by the coming man. He denounced every distinctive doctrine of the Cross, and the Biblical ideas of God and man, and the relations between them. With an over-weening self-consciousness, he seemed to have no settled faith in anything save Theodore Parker, and a chimerical "Absolute Religion," to which Christianity, with its hindering influence on progress, would yet give place. With these views he claimed to be an apostle of reform. With affluent stores of shining natural thought, he poured out novel suggestions of improvement, in lecture and sermon. He preached the essential nobility of man, and called for the "excelsior" spirit, to develop him into greatness and goodness. He demanded more tenderness in penal legislation.

He said many good and brilliant things. Abounding corruptions, wrongs, and crimes, were dealt with, with no gentle hand. Though most intolerant himself, he preached a beautiful evangel of magnanimity and liberality. Even if it was with acrimony and sarcasm, he called for the reign of charity and affection. He pleaded nobly for the freedom and elevation of the oppressed and lowly. He hated Slavery with cordial intensity, and dealt it many an earnest blow, which, though it fell in the Music Hall of Boston, was felt often in Carolina, and caused a growl of wrath on the waters of the Rio Grande. He might have done a sublime and lasting work, whose beatitudes should be tasted for many generations. But what has been the summing up of his labors? He unsettled the faith of thousands in the religion of the Bible. He awakened popular condemnation of some wrongs, but the infidelity with which he wrought, effaced more of good than it cured of evil. He was mighty to destroy; but he could reconstruct nothing. He ran the ploughshare through the only soil, in which virtue, righteousness and human excellence can grow. He blighted society more than he blessed it. Taking a position outside of Christianity, and working, not in the advancing line and onward current of its great principles and forces, but in conflict with its essential life, his activity was a serious hindrance to reform. He shook men's faith in *prayer*, which alone can keep the heart of a reformer cheerful, sweet and strong. He shook men's faith in the *Bible*, from which all reforms have rolled. He weakened men's *sense of sin*, furnishing them with a ready-made apology for the crimes against which he fought, drugging the conscience with opiates of his theology, while he struck at it with the goad of his ethics. While he spoke one sharp word against a special sin, he spoke ten against the possibility of any sin. His theology killed the air, so that reform could not live there. When we see how fundamental error permeated and poisoned all his work, notwithstanding the courage, and even sublime fury, of his assault on mighty sins, we are forced to regard his career, on the whole, as a

dark and backward eddy in the great on-sweeping current of human reform. Parker was an example of too many of our modern agitators. They uproot more of good than they destroy of evil. No one can be regarded as a true reformer, that puts into his teaching an anti-Christian leaven. He may press some valuable practical truth, with noble heroism, yet with it he conveys a poison-drop, which, flowing with the stream of the given truth, over the general fields of life, will kill the plants the stream was expected to nourish, and leave a sterile waste instead of the bloom and opulence of a garden of God.

4. It is instructive to test, by this principle, some supposed items of reform that are pressed in the present day. Some agitators are still urging an improvement on the Bible plan of punishing crime. They have raised a great cry against the death penalty, or indeed any penalty that amounts to adequate punishment to great criminals. The old rule of criminal jurisprudence, that comes to us with the signature of God upon it, reads: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of the murderer; he shall surely be put to death." This divine direction for the State, has never been repealed in the new dispensation, in which we are admonished that the civil magistrate bears the sword,—symbol of the death power—for the terror of evil-doers. But true to the instincts of a certain kind of reform, which represents all Bible directions as fit for a dark and infantile age of the world, but destined to be left behind in the grand progress of humanity, many have sought to abolish this rule as a relic of barbarism. A morbid sentiment of mercy has been allowed to canker the sense of justice. A humanitarian idea of God sinks all his justice in his benevolence, and would sink all punishment in reformatory love. Men talk about the incongruity of a gibbet for the offender after heaven has erected the cross for the rescue of the guilty. They speak as if justice had left the Divine throne, and all punishment been banished from the circle of divine procedure and approval.

But a few years ago, many seemed to be becoming opposed to all punishment—not believing much in it hereafter, and just as little here. A sickly sentimentality was for treating the criminal only with pity, tenderness, kindness and moral lectures. The dogma was, that the only proper use of punishment, is the reformation of the criminal, leaving out of view its office of maintaining the majesty and authority of law, and, thereby, the order of society, and the safety of person and property of the innocent. Popular lecturers, and papers of wide circulation and much ability, were engaged in spreading abroad the sickliest stuff about the inhumanity of what was called “judicial murder,” and cankering to mawkish sentimentalism the old moral sense of the justice of penal inflictions. Law was undermined in the impairing of its sanctions. Many of the States abolished capital punishment. Healthful and righteous indignation against the crime, was submerged in the deep feeling of commiseration for the criminal. Popular sentiment was turned against the execution of justice, and it looked as though the majesty of law was to be brought down, to lick the dust at the feet of every convicted wretch that deserved to be swung above the earth as an offering to justice and a vindication of the safety of society. But the bitter fruits of this wisdom of reformers that is *not* from above, soon began to appear in abounding crime, and insecurity of life. Many of the States that reformed Heaven’s penal code, have been obliged to recede from their fancied progress. And God’s judgments, teaching lessons through the shocking crimes of the last four years of rebellion, guerrilla murders and prison starvations, and President-assassination, have done something toward bringing back a proper sense of the sacredness and glory of justice. Deep has been calling unto deep, for a return of some of the old puritan *sternness*, of righteousness. Various facts in the current treatment of great offenders, and a disposition to conciliate rather than hurt, quite a catalogue of crimson-dyed wretches, make it seem doubtful whether the proper nerve has yet been put into the emasculated sen-

timent of justice in our land. But the Scriptures teach us, and Providence is confirming the teaching, which a false reform had well nigh obliterated from the public mind, that JUSTICE, in its place, is as holy a thing as MERCY is in its place. One, of old, sat upon a throne—a man after God's own heart—whose imprecatory prayers have been a perplexity to our humanitarian reformers. If they understood the true relations of justice and mercy, they would be perplexed no more.

5. A similar text might be applied to a phase of the political philosophy of some of our reformers. Out of our open Bible and Protestant Christianity, has come the true conception of liberty, the rights and equality of man, lying at the foundation of our free institutions. But there is a radicalism that would deprave liberty into mere license, and dismantle government of its rightful powers, by declaring it not an "ordinance of God," but a mere creature of general compact. Discarding the divine element in religion, it discards it also in government. Its conception is altogether infidel. It does not see "God's minister" in the civil officer, set to maintain order among men. It comprehends no sanctity in his position, but that growing out of his elevation by men. It fails to see that, though a majority may change or modify the outward form of government, there is "no power but of God." His seal alone legitimates it, and pours authority through it. It is a subordinate department of God's *own* government of the earth, and must ever be held in harmony with his own higher government and law. It is a glorious reform, when despotism gives place to free institutions, with the divine conception of the sanctity of government, and the obligation to obedience. But when men, standing, not on the Bible, but the Declaration of Independence, falsely interpret the latter as meaning that, unless each, man, or little knot of men, gives personal consent to every particular law, by which he is to be governed, he is not bound by its authority, we run at once into confusion and anarchy. Each one becomes a law unto himself; and obeys

only where he consents. Extreme ideas of personal liberty, foster a spirit of insubordination to regularly constituted authority. Under demagogic reformers, this feeling lately became rife in the land. Ignoring the divine law : "Thou shalt not curse the ruler of thy people;" "Speak not evil of dignities," they criticised and denounced rulers and laws, till respect and reverence were gone, and the bond that held many to them was as a shred of tow. The sentiment of obedience, and subordination to authority was corrupted. In family, Church and State, the bonds of order and law were broken down. "Young America" appeared on the stage, whose characteristic was that he cared little for authority anywhere. The scenes of violence and lawlessness through which we have passed are fraught with lessons of solemn instruction. The true doctrine of reform, does not thus degrade liberty into mere self-will, or unclothe government of its divinely given sanctity of authority, or lead to an insubordination that renders order, harmony and unity impossible.

6. But we must not mistake the relation of radicalism to reform. There are three kinds of radicalism. First, *a radicalism of doctrine*—marked by attempted improvement of the old Bible truths, breaking men's faith in Christianity, and running into infidelity. This kind wholly mistakes the way of reform. Secondly, *a radicalism of means*, marked by an impetuosity in effort, that will not wait the slow, sure process of gospel truth and agencies, but drives the chariot with intemperate hand and slashing whip. This kind may be laboring in the best interest of men, but by rushing fiercely on social evils, and fancying it can sweep them away by an instantaneous blow, it is often mistaken and imprudent. The *third*, is the *radicalism of true Christianity*, laying the axe at the *root* of all evils, with all the energies which the gospel has provided. Christianity is essential and true radicalism, in reference to every possible question of reform in man's condition, whether moral, social, or political. We hear of the conservatism of Christianity. There is such

a thing; but it is the conservatism that *saves* society by laying the axe at the root of all the evils, sins and wrongs that endanger it. It is not the conservatism that does nothing. The sad phenomenon of the prominence of an infidel radicalism in the initial movement of some of our great reforms—the anti-slavery agitation, for instance—has a solemn rebuke in it to much of the Christian Church of the land. It does not show that Christianity is not the true power of radical reform, only that an encrusting conservatism, foreign to it, had neutralized its power in the hands of many who were set to wield it. The anti-slavery weapons, used by infidels, were stolen from the armory of the Gospel. An indifference and dormancy, untrue to Christianity, on the part of many orthodox Christians, left a breach to the enemy. The Gospel was misrepresented. Its Churches and ministry gave slavery patrons and defenders. They repeated, not the mercy of the good Samaritan, but worse than priest and Levite, many ministers of the temple joined the thieves and robbers to strip and wound.

7. But the *triumphs* of reform, on the principle we have presented, authenticate it as the true principle of the world's future beneficent progress.' Past victories fling their guiding light before us. The progress of Christian truth, has been the progress of all kinds of social ameliorations, and redress of human wrongs. We believe it can be shown, that nearly every step in the progress of European civilization, liberty, and equality, has been the taking up into the national conscience and polity, of some single truth of the great system of Christian faith and Christian ethics. Chivalry owed all that it had of good, its honor and its courtesy, and regard to the feelings and rights of woman—all of good it had—to the principles of the gospel. Feudalism, as the antagonism of popular liberties, was destroyed by it. So modern democracy, in its sense of the equal rights of all, and of the responsibility of government, is but carrying out detached portions of Christian truth. The Reformation of the sixteenth century, was but the streaming forth from the unclasped Bible

of Christianity, of its reformatory virtue, as that virtue began to operate on the morals and life of men, and the customs and institutions of nations. We have from it, freedom of conscience, republican institutions, and all beautiful and ameliorating philanthropies. It was a Bible reform, and its golden fruits hang on every bough of life.

Let us behold Thomas Chalmers test the correctness of this principle. Ignorance, pauperism and crime, were burdening his wide parish with all their evils, and crying for remedy. Disdaining the various banners of reform proposed by false philosophy, or humanitarian sociology, Dr. Chalmers, with the gait of a champion, stepped forward with the ancient banner, the old legend still burning on its folds as in letters of golden fire, "*In this conquer.*" And in it he *did* conquer. He knew that, though the main mission of Christianity is to bring men to immortal treasures of joy, it yet, by a sublime necessity, scatters beatitudes in the paths of mortal life. He believed that it was able to marshal every force, and meet every requirement of social existence. He applied only gospel truth and agencies, and the parish rose in a moral, social and industrial renovation, that made it look toward heaven with a happy smile of peace and content, like the face of a strong man awakening to health after long sickness. It was a radiant demonstration of the reformatory power of Christianity.

We have had a recent illustration in our country. The axe of Christian truth was laid close to the roots of slavery. The reformatory power of the Gospel was pressing hard against it. Its friends banded to resist, and in its interest, evoked a mighty war against the Union. They determined to employ armies and artillery, to save themselves from the aggressive energy of Christian sentiment against their wrong. Heaven allowed the war they summoned to their aid, to go on. Hundreds of battle fields were ploughed by exploding shell, and crimsoned with blood. The waves of the conflict rolled north, and roared around the walls of our *Alma Mater*. Over this quiet town, the shot and shell shrieked,

amid deafening artillery thunder for three anxious days, and these hills and valleys, dear to us all by old familiarity, lay thick with the mangled slain, that fought and fell for the Union and right. But the crisis was past. The tide of defeated treason rolled back. War swept the Southern land with desolation for another two years. It was a fearful strife. We know not how many souls returned to God, heralded by the thunder of the battles on whose fields they left their bodies. But the end of the struggle has come, and the reformatory energy of Christianity, pressing on its way, even through the conflict evoked to arrest it, has buried the dishonored corpse of Slavery, amid the tears of gladness of a saved and disenthralled nation. It is a great reform, in the line of the true principle, wiping out a thousand minor wrongs and woes that clustered in Satanic fellowship under the central Upas evil. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, but the Higher than the stars fought against those who appealed to the sword, to stay the reformatory work of Christianity, when it pressed against their cherished wrong.

But we must be done. "The world moves," and if we wish to work in the line of its progress, we must take our position with the friends of Christianity, and employ its laws and agencies. Only thus will our works accredit our commission as reformers. We have reason to look for a progressively improved future of our race; though we believe the progress is not quite so rapid as is often pictured by enthusiastic declaimers and money-making lecturers. There are multiform wrongs, inequalities and disabilities, yet to be remedied. But the application of the teaching and energy of the gospel to one moral, social or political excrescence after another, is bringing the world gradually nearer the era of its hope. The poor and the oppressed are being enfranchised and elevated. More effective than communist or agrarian dreams, the cross is proving the great leveler. But it levels upward. Perhaps most of us have sometimes, in earlier life, had a feeling of incongruity and inappropriate-

ness in a certain simile of the greatest of the evangelical prophets: "It shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it." We have wondered at this strange representation of a flowing upward to the mountain summit. But the seeming incongruity was needed, to conform the figure to truth. It is but an expression of the fact, as it shines in history, that the conversion of men and communities, the Christianization of life, social, personal and political, is a movement of grand and universal elevation. "The House of the Lord," in its laws, forces, character, civilization, personal, social and civil beatitudes, presents the summit of the ideal elevation of man—the top of earth's mountains. And Christianity is bearing the race upward to it. When the world shall have gotten up on the level of the "House of the Lord," it will be the highest elevation of mankind, that lies lower than the eternal Paradise of God.



